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Newfoundland Labrador

Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
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Ministers to Gather in Port Hope Simpson to Attend Combined Councils of Labrador Annual Meeting

Labrador issues will be front and centre in Port Hope Simpson on Friday when Provincial Cabinet ministers attend the annual general meeting of the Combined Councils of Labrador (CCL), taking place this week.

"The issues that face Labradorians are being met head-on by the Provincial Government," said the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs. "As my Cabinet colleagues and I come together with the Combined Councils of Labrador at this year's meeting, I am confident there will be positive discussions on the challenges and opportunities that exist for the people of Labrador."

The Honourable Tom Rideout, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, will be the guest speaker at the CCL Luncheon on Friday. Also taking part in Friday's scheduled events are: the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs; the Honourable Kathy Dunderdale, Minister of Natural Resources; the Honourable Paul Oram, Minister of Business; the Honourable Kevin O'Brien, Minister of Government Services; the Honourable Tom Hedderson, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; and the Honourable Dave Denine, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is spending unprecedented amounts in Labrador as highlighted in the Northern Strategic Plan (NSP) announced in 2007. The plan sets out a course toward a stronger and more prosperous Labrador and clearly defines the role the region will play in the future success of the province. The Provincial Government will spend some $300 million over the five-year life of the plan. Under the NSP, significant improvements are being made to the transportation network, highlighted with considerable investments in the Trans Labrador Highway (TLH). The Provincial and Federal Governments are cost-sharing $45 million for hard-surfacing of Phase I of the TLH, while the Provincial Government is also investing $17 million for construction of Phase III.

In addition to increased investments to transportation infrastructure, more than $13 million, through the NSP, has been spent on other Labrador-specific initiatives this year, including:

- $1.6-million annual rebate, to reduce the cost of basic electricity consumption needs (on the Lifeline Block) for residential customers in Labrador's rural isolated communities and the Labrador straits to a level on par with the Labrador interconnected rates;
- $1,241,000, annually, to increase reimbursement of claimable expenses under the Medical Transportation Assistance Program;
- $550,000, annually, to the Labrador Travel Subsidy Program;
- $200,000, annually, to the Newfoundland Labrador Arts Council outreach program for Labrador; and,
- $69,300, annually, to increase patrols to monitor threatened caribou herds in Labrador.

"I very much look forward to attending my first Combined Councils of Labrador Annual General Meeting," said Minister Pottle. "The many issues faced by Aboriginal peoples are close to those of all Labradorians. My Cabinet colleagues and I look forward to participating in the sessions and engaging in open and frank discussions."

Established in 1972, the Combined Councils of Labrador provides an opportunity for municipal

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leaders throughout Labrador to gather and discuss issues of mutual concern, and to engage the Provincial Government in meaningful deliberations. The Provincial Government is pleased to provide $100,000 in annual funding to the CCL.

"Seeing that the House of Assembly is open for its spring session, the Combined Councils of Labrador appreciates the Provincial Government's involvement and dedication in this year's AGM," said Jim Farrell, acting president of the CCL. "We value both the financial and moral support the Provincial Government contributes to the CCL, and I look forward to continuing our strong partnership in the future."

"The Combined Councils of Labrador are an important voice for all of Labrador and I always look forward to attending these meetings," said Minister Hickey. "I extend heart-felt congratulations to the organizers and executive of the CCL on organizing what I am confident will be another successful AGM."

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